

8BIT

The magazine for users of all computers with an 8-bit heart

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A preliminary note from the editor:

If you have, or have ever had, an "older" computer (perhaps a Spectrum, a SAM, a Commodore C64/128, an Amstrad CPC or a PCW/DeW, an Einstein or an Oric, an Atari 8-bit or whatever) and you wanted a "cross-format" magazine to keep you up to date with ideas on its use in the face of the torrent of publicity in favour of later computer types, and if you wanted to keep abreast with any new programs or other developments for these computers, for the last four and a half years 8BIT magazine has been published for you.

Throughout the run of the magazine, it has been produced entirely (apart from some of the display advertisements submitted by magazine and software publishers, and also some of the other support organisations) using a varied range of 8-bit computer equipment.

But now at last, after nearly five years of publication, this is the final issue.

(Cue: sobs, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, etc)

Not too many magazines can claim to have been almost a whole year in preparation, but this one issue has. I hope you will feel it has been worth the long wait.

PS: At the time of closing 8BIT has a little over 800 subscribers, so we must have been doing something right!

The Independent Eight Bit Association (IEBA)

The **IEBA** provides a contact group and clearing house for *all* users of *all* 8-bit computers including CPCs, C64/128s, Ataris, Einsteins, Spectrums, Orics, PCW/PcWs, SAMs etc, and suppliers of 8-bit software, peripherals, magazines and other support, including user clubs. The **IEBA** has been set up, and is run, by a voluntary (unpaid) committee of representative users of many of the machines covered.

The **IEBA** works to publicise the practical and economic benefits of using the computers which might be described as **WIN** (**What I Need**) rather than **WINDOWS** (**What I Need Demands Over-stretched Wallet, Seemingly**), and to encourage continued use of the computers of the earlier generation. The **Association** is publicised through the various communications media and a campaign of publicity is maintained. Negotiations are on-going for a BBC radio spot in the South and East of England.

The first large project of the **IEBA** is its **Directory of 8-bit Services**, free to members and now in its fourth edition, which has been published on A4 paper to ensure equal ease of use by all. This includes clubs, magazines, repairers, suppliers (including PD libraries) etc. Much of the information is of value to more than just the primary target. For example, stockists of computer parts and peripherals for *one* 8-bit computer usually carry similar supplies for at least one *other*, though they may not publicise it loudly or widely enough because of the cost of advertising elsewhere. Most of the current entries are from UK-based organisations, but there are already some from mainland Europe and overseas, and it is hoped that the Directory can grow to be a globally-useful information resource on 8-bit computing.

All entries in the **IEBA** directory are *free and not conditional upon membership* to encourage maximum participation. Directory updates are published periodically as required by the availability of new information and these are offered to members at a little over the production price.

The **IEBA** is collaborating with the Amstrad CPC users' club called **WACCI** to co-underwrite and organise the first **UK8** 8-bit Convention. This will be held in Walsall, in the English Midlands, in September 1999. It is hoped this will be just the first in a series of similar events.

A postcard advertising campaign is under consideration, as are the establishment of mobile displays for use in libraries and similar sites. Other projects are also under discussion and suggestions are welcomed from the membership.

It costs just £5 to join the **IEBA**, plus £2 for members outside the UK towards the additional postage. Thereafter, life membership is free.

For an application form, send a self-addressed envelope to the Membership Secretary: Mr David Williams, 32/34, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, MOTHERWELL, ML1 4JL Scotland. Alternatively, e-mail the **IEBA** at ieba@spheroid.demon.co.uk

Brian Watson (Publicity Officer, **IEBA**)

SISYPHUS by Brian Watson

Sisyphus (for those who are not well-versed in Greek mythology) was a Corinthian king condemned in the underworld to push a large rock to the top of a hill. No mean feat in itself. But each time he managed to push it **nearly** to the top, the rock rolled back to the bottom of the hill and he had to start all over again, and again, and again. Publishing **8BIT** has been like that lately!

The readers have been **extraordinarily** patient in waiting for this last issue. Only 2 out of about 800 have requested, and been given, a refund of the remaining part of their subscriptions rather than wait for this final edition. I feel the rest of you are entitled to a proper explanation as to why the magazine is closing, and why this one has been so late.

For about five years now, I have been involved in **actively** promoting and supporting 8-bit computing because I believe in the use of "appropriate technology". Certainly it has not been for the money; those rewards are simply no longer there. Also, I believe I can do it reasonably well when I have the time. However, the computing stuff has to be secondary to what pays my bills.

Before I became involved in 8-bit computing, I was writing for a living. I also act and direct plays and I run a greeting card and gifts sales agency. That still doesn't quite fill **every** hour of my life, so I occasionally broadcast, play bass guitar really **very** badly and I am involved in more arts-related committees than is sensible for one person. But I love it!

One **could** reasonably claim that it was my extremely cramped timetable for many years which largely resulted in my wife and I going our separate ways in mid-1998, albeit on very friendly terms. Actually, it's far more complicated than that, but that is not a matter for further consideration here.

Anyway, an opportunity came up in September 1997 for me to start a new venture. This would be handling the "small order" end of a picture publisher's business. As it was obviously going to require a great deal of attention to set up and then run properly, I started reviewing and shedding all my non-essential activities, or putting "on hold" those which I would not be able to do properly during the setting-up period. Looking at things as objectively as I could, I decided that one of those activities which would have to go would be **8BIT**.

It had always been my intention to close the magazine before it became repetitious or boring. Feedback from the readers seemed to suggest that neither was in prospect but, nevertheless, there simply wasn't the time to do it to the standard I would like. I determined to close it with an issue which would not leave the subscribers without other sources of support for their computing.

Since the Big Decision, things have been ridiculously wearing. **The Image Business** has been more demanding than expected and the old businesses have got busier. On top of that, I have suffered a succession of computer failures: a **complete** loss of information on the PC due to my own incompetence, a locked-up memory on the NC200 with the nearly-completed "8-bit resources roundup" article trapped within it and, worst of all, a broken drive on the Amstrad CPC which has been the principal means of production throughout the magazine's run. Now the PcW16 has "conked out"! And all the time a steady drip, drip, drip, of letters from people needing help or asking when the final **8BIT** was coming out.

Well, at last I've finished **8BIT** and finished with **8BIT** and I can now get my life back. So may I say to those who've stayed the course, "thank all of you most sincerely for your amazing loyalty and patience."

Brian Watson

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THE FUTURE OF 8-BIT COMPUTING by Brian Watson

Introduction

With the closure of **8BIT** magazine, to the end still under its founding editor, it is perhaps a suitable time to speculate on the prospect of continuation of **other** available support for the 8-bit generation of computers. For it is precisely the extent, and particularly the **quality**, of that support which will largely determine the longevity of these computers and their continuing in day-to-day use.

The comments are mostly my own, and so made from a British perspective but, as Britain was the home of many of the companies which originated the marketing of the computers discussed, what happens here will continue to have a major effect, for good or ill, on 8-bit computer users in Europe and beyond.

Just in passing, I mention an area which has been covered hardly at all in **8BIT** during its run. The North American branch of the hobby continues to be very active in "build-it-yourself" computing, both from complete kits of parts and also from individual electronic components. For those who would like some support for this branch of the hobby I can recommend **The Computer Journal**. Further details of how to obtain the contact details of this magazine and other remaining 8-bit support services can be found at the end of this article.

The Lone Computer User

It is true to say that, **regardless** of what happens to the various support agencies, many or users of older models will be soldiering on in splendid isolation, totally oblivious to the availability of any external support, organised or otherwise. Indeed it is arguable that, even at the time of writing (February 1999), the **majority** of 8-bit computer users around the world probably use their computers without any formal support.

One wonders how many homes have a Spectrum, C64, MSX, CPC or whatever which still gets a regular "hammering" as a games machine, having perhaps been bought at a boot sale or passed on by an older relative who now claims to have outgrown it, either for a 16/32-bit type, or for **no** home computer at all.

For it is easy for us enthusiasts to assume that **every** home has some sort of computer (in the usual "keyboard plus monitor" sense) in almost daily use, whereas a look around among one's own neighbours and relations will show that **that** is still very far from being the case. We home computer users can be a very introspective fraternity/sorority, so we assume that we are typical of the world at large. Computing equipment is now in virtually every home, but it is frequently "disguised" as the device controllers in washing machines, central heating systems, VCRs and so on.

Despite the hype, ubiquitous home computing is still a "coming thing." Sitting one metre from a screen getting cramps in both wrists is still not sufficiently attractive to "turn on" the majority of the population; they are **far** too sensible for that!

But as long as the 8-bit game-players can continue to obtain a regular top-up of "new-to-him (or her)" titles as well as a steady supply of unbroken joysticks from car boot sales or - the more expensive options - the local paper and the advertisement cards in shop windows, the interest will be kept alive sufficiently to stave off the boredom which inevitably leads to a lack of use of the computer and its eventual disposal, either via a sale to another user or, more likely these days, to the local waste disposal facilities.

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Similarly, how many PCW, Oric, Einstein or other 8-bit computer users still word process, maintain family history records, keep their home accounts, or write their own programs in BASIC for their own satisfaction and use, on a computer which the computer **business** says was dead and buried years ago?

They know very well that their preferred computers have not been made for years but, as long as the local library still stocks (or can order from another branch) some rather dog-eared books on using old computers which were bought in when budgets for such publications were a little looser, they will continue to use their computers until something important fails.

This "last straw" might be something as cheap and easy to replace as a drive belt or a particular type of old printer's ribbon, inkjet cartridge, or print-head, but knowing where to get one, and at an affordable price that doesn't include a £30 charge "just to take the back off, squire," can make the difference between carrying on using the old computer and throwing it out and **oneself** onto the mercy of the PC "box-shifters".

You Don't Know What You've got 'Til It's Gone

So, what is the extent of good support for the 8-bit computer user now, and how appropriate to the likely demand, and how secure is it for the future? I'll make a couple of general observations first, then consider each of the major surviving formats in turn.

As far as it has been possible to ascertain, there are now **no** news-stand magazines covering 8-bit computers published anywhere in the world. **Future Publishing's PCW Plus** was the last.

However, one nationally-available resource which has already been mentioned here in passing is, at least in the UK, the public library service. Most central (city and town) libraries carry **some** 8-bit books and can draw others from other libraries. In addition, some may carry tutorial videos. I was amazed to find while researching this piece that Cambridge library, for instance, has basic **and advanced** tuition videos on the Commodore 64, MSX and PCW in their brand new IT (information technology) section.

1) MSX and Atari 8-bits

At the outset of this summary, it should be pointed out that the type and extent of support for many of the early 8-bit computers, including the **MSX** models for instance, remains something of a mystery to the editor. Throughout **8BIT's** run, substantial effort has been put into trying to locate reliable information on the less common 8-bit formats. This has been without much success in many cases. That is not to say it doesn't exist, only that it has proved to be rather elusive.

2) Einstein, Oric and Sharp

The **Einstein**, the **Oric** and the **Sharp** computers all have a passionate and dedicated following and each has a user club publishing periodic magazines. At this point it is worth mentioning that, while **all** editors of computer club magazines are constantly appealing for articles, the Einstein group's magazine in particular has hung in there, obviously existing on a shoestring budget yet still providing an awesome level of informed written support to the users through a publication which often gets printed on the backs of some quite surprising "one side used" paper. The Sharp and Oric clubs' publications are both much more professional-looking affairs and they too include topical features as well as very useful articles on programming.



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About Us



Dennis Young, a retired electronics engineer, and his wife, Peg, carry out most of the PCW & PcW LocoScript salvages and the transfers and conversions from PCW to PC. Dave Smith, now also retired, works on the PC, CP/M, MAC and unusual salvages and conversions and also takes on all the difficult tasks that most people think are impossible! Dave's wife, Sue, plays a key role in the whole operation by keeping the necessary paperwork and administration under control.

3) Spectrum and SAM

The **Spectrum** and **SAM** series are very different computers, although the SAM includes an ability to emulate a Spectrum in many ways. Because of this, many Spectrum users "graduated" to SAM use on an "as well as" basis. There are also, of course, those whose only 8-bit computer was either a Spectrum or SAM.

What the Spectrum and SAM also have in common is that the users of both of those computer formats principally network through printed magazines. There **are** some clubs covering the formats, but the sheer exuberance of most Spectrum users, and SAM users to a lesser extent, seems to require a periodic visible expression! The fact that many of these magazines come, go, come back again, change editorial staff, merge and de-merge only reflects and enhances the life and vibrancy of the Spectrum and SAM scenes. Magazines on tape and disk also exist, the usual content of articles often being bulked up with PD programs and ex-commercial software.

In terms of the Public Domain and "small press" software for the Spectrum and SAM there is an abundance of both available on tape and disk. Because of the large user base of the Spectrum, especially in the UK, there are sufficient enthusiasts around the world to ensure continuing availability of Spectrum software for very many years yet.

The very divisive feud which raged a few years ago between a couple of Spectrum-supporting factions has abated at last, which means that they can both get on with doing what they do best; supporting the computer format which they both favour.

The SAM is one of the very few 8-bit computers which is still in production "new ex-stock" today in its "Elite" version. Though the users have to rely on small publishers, the quality of the SAM software which is available is quite superb in many cases. I stand by my opinion, expressed here some time ago, that the SAM is the best "all-round" 8-bit computer. If I didn't already have an office which is positively **stuffed** with computers (many of which will be going to new homes soon) I would certainly have bought one by now.

4) ZX and QL

I will mention the **ZX** and **QL** only briefly here. Each have their passionate devotees who seem to have taken the precaution of setting up tight and efficient support networks as the official sources dried up. Speaking as an outsider, both seem to be very well established, but rather inward-looking to me, which suggests a very long slow decline as new owners of the machines may find it very difficult to locate the necessary information needed to join the established network.

5) Amstrad CPC Series

The **Amstrad CPC** user seems to be the most vulnerable, in terms of the likelihood of long-term provision of support. There have been a number of local CPC clubs down the years, and there are still a few of them left. Many CPC-orientated tape and disc magazines have come and gone, often connected to PD software libraries which have come and gone with them.

There also used to be quite a few A5 paper magazines, most of them were churned out with ghastly blocky typefaces and excruciating spelling and grammar. The technical expertise in the articles within, however, was very valuable to the home programmer. What the CPC fanzines all shared was passion, and the bitching which characterised most of them was just the expression of a very competitive network of extremely intelligent late-night candle-burners.

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Bonzo's Scrapyard

The occasional newsletter for Amstrad CPC
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Bonzo's Scrapyard, the tape to disc transfer information newsletter, using the Bonzo suite of programs, published quarterly, is available now from the above address. To receive a copy, send an A5 or A4 sized SAE, plus an additional first class stamp.

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- 5 Maxidos and CPC Procopy

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Also available is the MS800 big format program, this is supplied on 3.5 inch disc and costs £6.50, including P&P.

please make cheques etc. payable to Mr D. A. Caleno.

The CPC came supplied with a very "friendly" BASIC which led to many of the computers' owners into venturing into machine code programming, and it is interesting to note in passing that many of those who are still programming for the PCW series, including the rather idiosyncratic new-ish PcW16, gained much of their early Z80 chip programming experience on the CPC.

For reasons which are now lost in the mists of time, CPC users in the UK have historically supported each other mainly through two national clubs. The problem inherent in this kind of support provision, whether to computer users (as in this case) or any other kind of single-interest enthusiasts, is that the "power" in the club is **perceived** as being vested in very few hands, and those hands can be seen by the membership from time to time as being very autocratic and remote. The fact that the so-called "powerful" few are also doing the overwhelming majority of the donkey work in the club is of course conveniently overlooked by the armchair critics.

All clubs, in whatever field of interest, have a high percentage of "consumers" and a low percentage of "do-ers", and it ill behoves the "consumers" to carp from the sidelines, but this is exactly what has happened in recent years, particularly in one of the "big two" CPC clubs. The resulting atmosphere has often been one of imminent doom and disaster, with one official after another threatening to wind the club up and/or quit, much to the general distress of most of the general membership, who could usually only watch in frustrated dismay from the sidelines as the dramas unfolded.

So it seems from here that if they get their act together, the future for CPC users can continue to be quite rosy. If not, not.

6a) Amstrad PCW/PcW

To deal with the **Amstrad PCW** after the Amstrad CPC seems to be a logical step, and yet the PCW's user support provision is quite different in nature to that of its close relative. What best describes it now is the word "mature".

A year or so ago, the PCW world **was** widely regarded as rather staid and its membership mostly elderly and steadily declining. The machine **is** largely regarded, even among most of its users, as "only" a text grinder, but the ability of LocoScript 4 to handle graphics, and some of its users' enthusiasm for experimentation with e-mail, PCW/PC file conversion programs, and the MicroDesign art program have given it a new lease of life in the years since the last newsstand magazine covering the series closed down.

The particular strength of the PCW users network is that, as well as a couple of nationally-distributed news-stand magazines in the UK in the PCW's heyday, the owners have traditionally also always kept in touch through local clubs, sometimes under the umbrella of an evening class centre. In some cases this has been on a simple "PCW club" basis, sharing experience and benefiting from the visits of guest speakers; in others the PCW has been the recommended computer for courses on "an introduction to computing", "genealogical research", or "writing for profit", or similar themes.

This "shared experience" has a more "bonding" effect than a national club system conducted by mail. That said, one of the longest-running clubs, formerly known as the South Essex PCW Club, has now renamed itself **The British PCW Club**. This is not mere pretension; the fact is that the club has put a lot of effort into building a national, and indeed international, network of membership as well as catering to an ever-widening circle of local members. It can hold regular meetings with at least **some** of its members meeting face to face, which should ensure that the petty jealousies which have afflicted some of the other computer formats can be dispelled before they get out of hand.

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The other thing for which PCW users can be grateful (and which other formats might reasonably envy) is that there is a **very** good new national magazine, **PCW Today**. From fanzine origins this has "grown up" to become a very attractive and professional-looking publication. Other formats' magazines have frequently slavishly stuck with the DTP software and technology of their preferred computer, arguing that it would be heresy to do otherwise. Not so PCW Today, which from the outset has been produced on a modern computer with modern software and the skilful eye and hand of an editor who knows how to get the best results from that set up. He has also shown himself to be very adept at maintaining a steady continuous improvement issue by issue.

There is nothing else currently in print for any other format which is as good as PCW Today. Anyone who is familiar with Future Publishing's house style, especially as it was applied to their 8-bit publications, will know what to expect: it's **that** good. This is not intended to de-motivate any of the other 8-bit magazine editors: it **should**, I hope, be an inspiration to other editors to reconsider how they can raise their own standards to new heights.

6b) Amstrad PcW16

The still relatively new (at the time of writing this) PcW16 with its PC-compatible disk formats, unique WYSIWYG operating system and rapidly falling retail price, has at last started climbing out of its difficult origins to make a reasonable reputation for itself, building on the tradition - though not the software base - of the 8, 9 and 10 series PCW/PcWs.

It is frequently now sold at a price well under £130, and at that price or cheaper the PcW16 is an acceptable first computer for the home, and it makes a **very** good cheap option if simple PC file and disk compatibility is important to you and you already own a PcW with a 3.5" drive. 720k DS/DD and 1.44Mb DS/HD disk formats are automatically recognised, for both importing and exporting files between a '16 and a PC. Old PcW formats are also **read** (only) by the PcW16. In other words, this only works only for importing files **into** the PcW16.

The PcW16's v1.04 operating system, as originally supplied with the computer, is now upgraded to v1.12. This is still available free through Brian Watson at the usual address, and included is an upgrade to the Questions and Answers file. Don't expect there to be a later version of either of these; the programmer who did the upgrades has now moved on to other projects at Amstrad.

Both a CP/M emulator and additional fonts are (at last!) coming on-stream to meet the '16 users' requests. If they sell as well as is hoped and expected more '16 software will follow with user support for them coming through the existing PCW clubs and magazines.

But now the bad news. For all its pluses, the PcW16 is **still** very badly bugged in several of its supplied functions over two years after its first introduction so, with no prospect of further bug-fixes or enhancements, it can only really be seen as a "hobby" computer. Anyone who wants a reasonable level of reliability should be looking to a different 8-bit computer.

7) Amstrad NC100/150/200

Very much the almost-forgotten "orphans" of Amstrad 8-bit computing, Amstrad's NC notebook series appear to have absolutely no support structure in place for its many devoted users. As there appears to be quite a lot of active demand out there for one, perhaps someone will emerge to establish a group.

The NCs could be the first computer format to get a comprehensive user support network established for it only **after** its production had long ceased.

IEBA

The Independent Eight Bit Association

The Independent Eight Bit Association, formerly solely a SAM and Spectrum group, now works to support and promote the use of *all* 8-bit computers, including the Amstrad CPCs, PCWs, and NC100/200 notepads, BBCs, Commodore C64/128s, Einsteins, Orics, SAMs, Sharps, Spectrums etc ... if it has an eight-bit processor, it is supported by the IEBA.

- The group have already produced a comprehensive **Directory of 8-bit Services**, a copy of which is free to members upon joining.
- When the IEBA has something to discuss among the membership, it publishes and distributes a free newsletter.
- The group's officers use a wide range of computer types themselves.
- The IEBA is seeking to set up a portable display module for use in libraries exhibitions.

Membership of the IEBA costs just £5. There is no annual subscription, and no renewal fee. For further details and a membership application form, write to the Membership Secretary, Brian Watson, at Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

Pipeline Software Tutorials

The Pipeline Software Tutorials, written for CPC computers and acting as a professional quality series of introductory guides to programming, are now available again exclusively from Brian Watson under licence from Sentinel Software. The copyright remains with the author of all parts of the series, Robin Gilbert.

• Pipeline Tutorials have long been respected as *the* definitive and comprehensive series for CPC users who wish to take their computer use beyond 'off the shelf' programs and into BASIC, assembler, and other programming techniques. All are printed on A4 paper with card covers and comb-bound to lie flat in use.

• Each Pipeline Tutorial costs £5, including the postage and packing, in the United Kingdom. Orders from outside the UK should include £3 extra per order towards postage and secure packaging, regardless of the quantity of Tutorials being ordered.

• There are associated disc files available for some Tutorials. When the series was first issued these files cost extra; now they are supplied *free* onto the purchaser's own discs.

• A catalogue of the Pipeline Tutorials series may be obtained in return for a stamped, addressed, A4 envelope to Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA.

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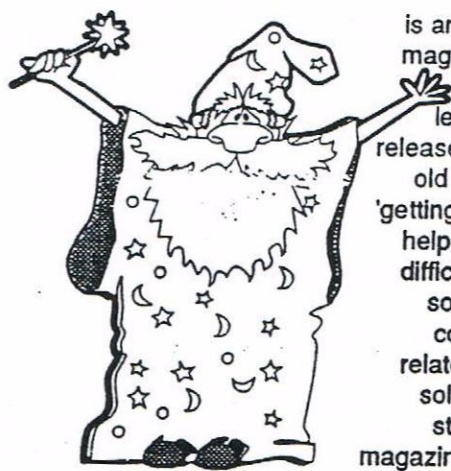
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8) Commodore 8-bit Computers

Commodore 8-Bit users already have a very strong user support system in place. The predominant means of networking now seems to be through diskzines. Although it must be admitted that some very good paper magazines also exist, even these often offer a disk as part of the subscription benefits. Apart from their supplied operating system, Commodore users are also blessed with a quite impressive choice of widely-used alternative operating systems such as JiffyDos and Geos, and even a version of that 8-bit **lingua franca**, CP/M.

However, this available choice is rather a mixed blessing in terms of deciding which one to use. The Geos system is a potentially wonderful thing in that, like Windows on the PC, the general acceptance across the user base of a "plug-in your extras" system encourages the development of applications to work with it. The fact that America was the home of the Commodore and therefore the series had its largest user base there means that, even if the **percentage** of users as compared with other computers drops away, there will still be a large **number** of users, especially in the US, who still actively work on the Commodore machines. The problem for European users is staying in touch with them.

Fortunately, e-mail and other communications applications abound for the Commodore series, but for those European hobbyists who prefer to benefit from the speed of faster modems and the consequent lower costs of getting onto the Internet to use download sites, it is becoming quite usual for Commodore 8-bit users to have a PC and a C64/128 working in tandem on the same desk.

The "last laugh" for Commodore 8-bit fans is that a substantially updated and revised version of the original C64 is currently being relaunched by the inheritors of the Commodore brand name as a dedicated Internet machine!

8) For The Heretics

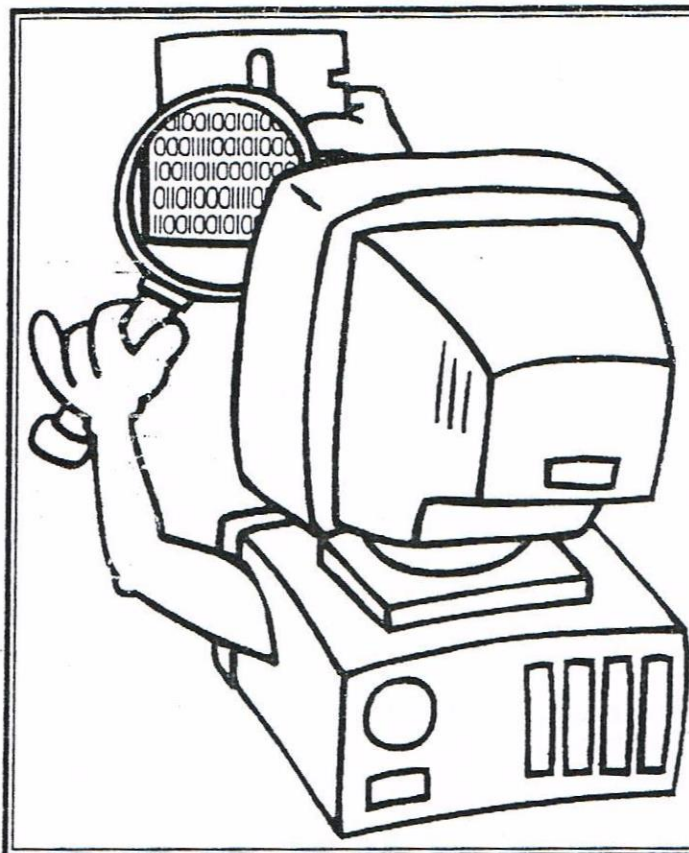
Paradoxically, if 8-bit computers are prepared to accept a PC or Mac into their homes, a whole new source of support for **all** the 8-bit formats becomes available. Because the PC has become the world's choice in computing equipment it has also become **the** preferred option for "upgraders" from 8-bit systems.

Both the Atari and Commodore Amiga 16-bit computer systems sit rather uncomfortably in the middle, between the 8-bits and the PCs. Despite the recent arrival of the iMAC, the MAC series still has a much smaller user base than the ubiquitous PC, so will not be discussed further here even though, in the opinion of many, it offers the user a **better** computing system than a PC.

Even a quite modestly equipped PC allows quick and easy communication between users via the e-mail system, and most of the 8-bit formats have their own newsgroups within the Usenet system for enthusiasts to chat and for the dissemination of 8-bit information. As a few examples of what I mean, there are newsgroups called comp.sys.oric, comp.sys.amstrad.8bit, comp.sys.atari.8bit, alt.c64, comp.sys.sinclair and comp.sys.atari.8bit; you see a pattern in the names' structure? Ah, those Commodore users; they always go their own way!

There are programs called emulators which run on a PC and enable it to temporarily pretend to be an 8-bit computer, even to being able to run most of the old 8-bit computers' software. I must confess that why **anyone** would actually **want** to do this, when the original 8-bit equipment is now available so cheaply through second-hand sources and, anyway, the program/game controls are so much easier to operate on an actual 8-bit computer, remains a mystery to me.

But it **can** be done if that becomes your preference. But where does the software come from if you choose to use a PC with an emulator? Read on...



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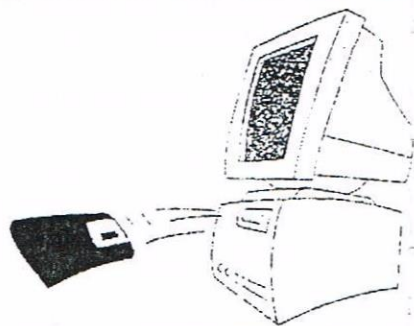
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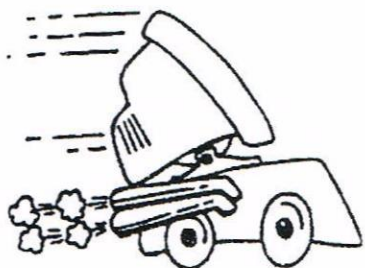
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MUMPIITZ is a monthly mag and gratis (a kind of paper shareware - international reply coupons are welcome). For a test copy write to

Hans-Christof Tuchen, Lotzestr.10,
D-12205 Berlin

So, Suppose You Decide to Buy a PC

Perhaps **this** section should have had "heresy" somewhere in the title?

As a general guide, if you feel you want to add to your present computer ownership with a PC, I would generally suggest that you avoid one which uses 5.25" disks. These are getting harder to find than even 3" discs and there is little point in starting out with a "new" system which is already well on the way to redundancy.

It is true that you may have a system, particularly a Commodore, for which the default drive **was** a 5.25" mechanism, but for **most** purposes I suggest you stick to looking for a PC which has at least one 3.5" drive so that you have an access point for transferring files between computers.

It is not my intention here to plough through all the "pros" and "cons" of what to look for in your choice of a PC. What I **do** suggest is that you go to a privately-owned computer shop, rather than one of the branches of the "multiples", as often the smaller shops will be staffed by people who were 8-bit users themselves and will therefore know what **you** are talking about when you start mentioning "emulators" and such arcane things to them.

Also, when you need help with your PC, "and sooner or later you **will** need help with it, mark my words" he added ruefully, a person whose shop is down the road and round the corner from where you live will be a damn sight cheaper to get help and advice from than a national company's helpline to who-knows-where at goodness-knows-how-much a minute.

So What Else Remains as Sources of Software and Support?

1) Mailing Lists

Unsolicited material, known to the unwilling recipients as "spam", can be a real nuisance when it arrives with your e-mail, but one service to which you can subscribe by e-mail (and **unsubscribe** later if you decide you want to) is a weekly bulletin which arrives by e-mail of where an enormous number of computer "fairs" (actually sales events not unlike indoor car-boot sales) are being held throughout the UK.

Most of the kit which turns up at these computer fairs is only for PCs, unfortunately for us, but the occasional "gems" relevant to 8-bit computing, such as a slow-speed external modem which an 8-bit computer can use to good advantage, does turn up from time to time.

2) Cross-format Magazines

As far as it has been possible to ascertain, **8BIT** has been the only cross-format computer publication to stay the course this far. A similar publication which was launched under the banner of the "8-bit Alliance" about a year after **8BIT** started in September 1994 seems to have sunk without trace. One might **almost** think it was done to provide some competition to this publication, or merely bask in a kind of reflected glory. Well it went, and until now it did not seem that there were any other would-be inheritors of the **8BIT** mantle waiting in the wings.

However, times change and people recognise a demand, and I am now pleased to be able to say that there will be a kind of continuation of 8-bit support even when this editor retires to grow orchids, prune the plum trees, plum the prune trees, etc, etc.

Continuing Availability of Software

Well firstly, there's "Gus' Hoard" as described in issue 19 of **8BIT**. For those of you who may have missed it, this is a **huge** stash of "as new" 8-bit software which now belongs to someone who used to sell it to shops. It is to be hoped that a substantial extract from this treasure trove can be brought to the **UK8** show (qv) in September 1999 for sale to users of original 8-bit equipment.

During the period of steep decline of the Spectrum format in the late 1980s, some remarkable pioneering work was done by a hard-working few to obtain the necessary permissions from the copyright holders for the free, non-profit making, distribution of many Spectrum software titles which had formerly been fully commercial releases.

Now most **other** computer formats' supporters have followed up this work to get similar understandings for their own formats' software.

Copyright law as it affects software is an absolute in legal terms, but the currently accepted practice among 8-bit users seems to be understood as follows; "if a software title is still being published it should neither be copied nor distributed by anyone else, **especially** if it is still being **supported** by the proper owner/publisher in terms of providing some sort of help facilities to legitimate owners."

Please note that this is not to condone piracy, quite the reverse. It is also to report what is believed to be the accepted current practice. Accepted, that is, by the majority of copyright holders as well as the users.

And as well as the consequent availability at little or no cost of this ex-commercial software, there is also still quite a lot of good PD (public domain) and Shareware software available, usually through the clubs. User support may be non-existent for it now, and generally any reviews which might be found in the club magazines or old commercial computing press should be referred to before getting one's hopes up! Incidentally, the glory days of the 8-bit PD "barons" making a small fortune (at about 50p a transaction!) out of their customers are now long gone.

Another type of software, alongside the "serious" software applications, which is common to **all** those computers with sound and colour graphic-handling capabilities is the "demo". These PD exercises in home-brew programming stand as self-evident exhibits of what can be done within the limitations (albeit by stretching them a bit) of each computer type's hardware, and they are often every bit as entertaining as commercial software. They are yet another part of the 8-bit software scene which is "fan-led", so they are not threatened by the diminution of commercial rewards.

Virtually all of this vast array of software which is now "Freeware", PD or "virtually PD" is also available for use with the aforementioned emulators on a PC by simply downloading it from well-publicised sites on the Internet. Unless you have a particularly poorly-equipped Internet Service Provider this will cost you the price of a local phone call to download it into your PC.

In some cases, the **Protext** word processor included, permission has been given by the copyright holders for programs to be distributed in their emulator form **only**. However, such is the ingenuity of some computer users that a bit of "reverse-engineering" is possible; taking the emulator version and converting it back into its original form to be usable on the original computer(s) for which it was designed. Definitely a bit naughty, that technique, and not being recommended at all by **this** software tycoon!

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Martyn Sherwood of Wallis Publishing (who also already puts out a number of other computing periodicals) is already publishing a new magazine intended to pick up where **8BIT** leaves off. The new magazine is called **6502/Z80**, and fuller details of that publication will be found elsewhere in this issue.

The new magazine under its new editor does not mean that **8BIT** has been sold. It hasn't, and the mailing list has not been passed on to Martyn or anyone else. For four and a half years our back page has declared that readers' details would be kept confidential and even now with the magazine's closure that is being honoured. However, Martyn's project is proceeding with the **8BIT** editor's good wishes, and it is hoped that **this** magazine's readership will give the new publication a try.

Incidentally, as close as **8BIT** ever came to being sold was when Alex de Vries of Crystal Software from Holland tried to open negotiations for the magazine and the Amstrad software I publish. So, for those who read the story of that farrago, one could reasonably say that it never came close at all....

The Independent Eight Bit Association

A surprisingly large number of companies and individuals still produce, sell, and support software for 8-bit computers. Without any doubt, the best source for finding fuller details of these, including the various other support agencies such as clubs and single-format magazines which are mentioned in this article and a lot more who are not, is the periodically-updated **Directory of Eight Bit Services** which is impeccably edited by John Walker and published by the IEBA (Independent Eight Bit Association).

A copy of the latest edition of the Directory at the time of joining is an immediate benefit of joining the IEBA, and subsequently updated editions can be purchased by the members at just a little over the cost of each edition's publication.

Incidentally, inclusion in the IEBA's Directory is free to all clubs, magazines and other support organisations to encourage the fullest possible participation in its purpose, which is to be the affordable central reference source on 8-bit computing support. It is published on paper rather than disk to optimise accessibility, regardless of which computer format you use.

The second major project of the IEBA after the Directory is the co-funding and co-promotion with the WACCI CPC computer club of a "cross-format" computer show, to be called **UK8**, which will be held in the English Midlands in September 1999. The emphasis is intended to be more social than financial, as will be seen from the available facilities, the low prices of admission (£2 per head) and the similarly modest table-booking charges.

That said, 300+ visitors can be accommodated at the venue and it seems that 30+ tables will be available for booking by organisations of all sizes, so the event should be a "must" for your this year's social calendar if you want to see what's hot and what's not in 8-bit computing.

Fuller further details will be found elsewhere in this issue, but it is hoped that this will be the first in a **series** of low-cost get-togethers for 8-bit computer users.

The closing of **8BIT** magazine under its founding editor will free up the editor to re-double his efforts as the Publicity Officer of the IEBA, and other ideas are already under consideration. That said, the Association is always open to suggestions for new activities from within the membership.

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Speccy

Our CPC catalogue contains a huge list of disc compilations of demos, games, business, clipart etc. We also have details of the United Amstrad User Group - and we are responsible for producing their bi-monthly magazine, under Wallis Publishing. We take out the hassle of ordering software as we cover postage, packing, media protection, AND the media, ranging from C30's to C90's and DD 3.5 discs (NOT 3" disc). A points bonus scheme (all formats) is on all titles. Collect enough points for FREE software packs of your choice. Send for a FREE catalogue - for details of an unrivalled service that is prompt, reliable & friendly.

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More frequent publication of the IEBA's newsletters may be expected too. Monica Dickerson, first editor of all the Association's newsletters up to now, has just recently had to stand down, but the Association's Publicity Officer will be doing the job until the vacancy can be filled. So as not to compete with any of the computer-specific publications, the new version of the IEBA newsletters may take the form of a periodic update to the Directory listings, and perhaps also include FAQs (frequently asked questions) on specific formats, as well as providing the latest information on the UK8 get-together.

The IEBA currently has a once-only £5 joining fee, and there are no membership renewal charges. Full contact details for the IEBA can be found elsewhere in this final issue of 8BIT.

Other On-going User Support when 8BIT Has Gone

Further information on any of the resources mentioned in this article can be obtained by sending a self-addressed envelope, with a £1 coin enclosed - as a token amount towards servicing the enquiry and the return postage - to Brian Watson at the usual 8BIT address.

This offer remains open after the closing of 8BIT magazine, but "if no pound enclosed, no reply should be expected". Oh, I've become a heartless, penny-pinching, old devil in my old age!

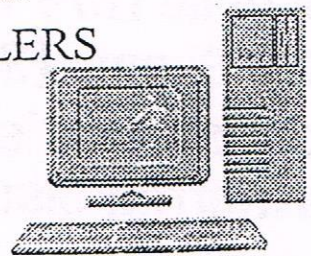
Also, my phone and fax will revert to being solely domestic and business utilities rather than virtual 24 hour helplines for all things related to 8-bit computing, which they have both been for the last four and a half years.

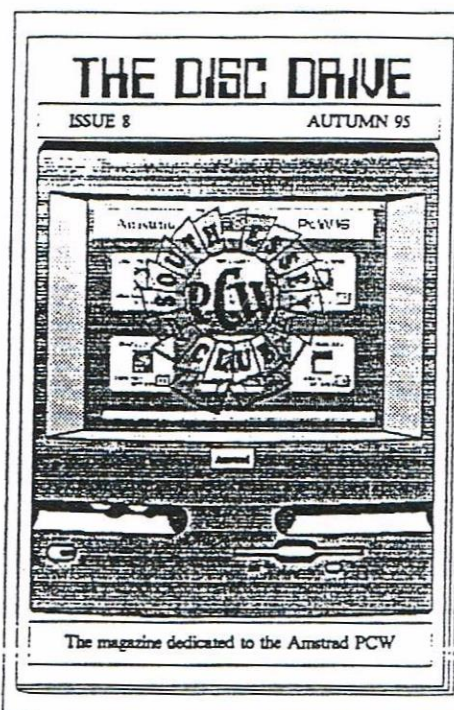
I really did get a phone call on the Boxing Day of our second year of publication enquiring as to when the next 8BIT was coming out. I was so speechless I gave him a civil reply.

The telephone line "user support" here is reverting to 7pm-9pm (weekdays) availability for the purchasers of the software which I publish. Everything else is going "postal".

Brian Watson

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THE PCW16 PAGES by Brian Watson

Not quite as extensive a feature on the PCW16 as I had hoped for in this final issue, but do not abandon hope! In future I will be submitting all the PCW16 material that either comes my way or that I write myself to the **British Amstrad PCW Club** and **PCW Today** (contact details elsewhere in this issue) for possible inclusion in their excellent publications, so you are advised to stay in touch with what is happening for the '16 through them.

First, from the comp.sys.amstrad.8bit newsgroup, comes a very interesting announcement from John Elliott (jce@seasip.demon.co.uk) on 7th July 1998:

"If anyone would like to try out an alpha test version of CP/M 2 for the PCW16, it's at http://www.seasip.demon.co.uk/Cpm/software/cpm2_001.zip for downloading" The documentation accompanying it says it can't be distributed, but the latest version can be found at <ftp://lip6.fr>

A later news release is dated 11th July 1998:

"I have updated my CP/M 2 implementation for the PCW16. This release allows keyboard redefinition, which means that it's now possible to use the cursor keys properly. It also supports more of the escape codes used by the original PCW/PCW's terminal driver.

"I can assure you that CP/M 2 and CP/M 3 work very well on the PCW16. In the course of implementing CP/M 3, I have determined never to use Rosanne (the PCW16's own system) to read a CP/M disc if I can use the CP/M BDOS instead."

Columns of text on a PCW16

I am really surprised that apparently no-one has figured out how to do this apart from me. Each owner who I have spoken to swears it can't be done and I must admit it's a bit of a fiddle, plus a bit of trial-and-error, but the results are well worth it (probably). So, be the envy of your colleagues at the club by reading to the end of the article and then trying it out for yourself.

The word processor which is supplied with the '16 could be said to be a **little** basic - actually, that's putting it mildly! However, its paper feed control system is actually quite accurate. Or so it appears on my now fairly ancient Canon BJ200 inkjet printer.

Because of the precise way in which each sheet of paper is passed through the printer, setting up a '16 to produce columns is a **morceau de gateau** (as they might say in France) if you are prepared to pass the same sheet through two or three times and exercise a bit of care in the editing of your text.

To summarise, what you will do is pass the paper through the printer once for the headers and footers, then once **again** for the printing of the first column of text, then once **more** for the second column. Incidentally, if you get ambitious and don't mind cutting and pasting text into a series of page templates, you can achieve more columns per page. Theoretically there is virtually no limit but if there is an odd number of them (say 3 or 5 columns) the centre one has to be set up as a separate job without a "partner" page.

To begin the process, and here I'm assuming you will be starting with the standard A4 page settings, decide whether you will want to include headers or footers. If you **do** want to use them, set **them** up first and run off a few (say 5 or 6) pages using the backs of some once-used A4 sheets. It goes some way to sparing a tree or two, and think of the money you're saving.

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Remember: this is your last chance to contact us through the pages of *8-bit*.

Now to mess with your margins. First need to boot up the Word Processor, start a new document and select **DOCUMENTS**, **SET MARGINS**, then **FACING PAGES**. Set the **INSIDE MARGIN** to 30mm and the **OUTSIDE MARGIN** to 120 mm. Ensure that **SUPPRESS WIDOWS AND ORPHANS** is selected then "tick" to store the settings.

Type in a couple of pages of text just as you usually do. You can include tabbed insets at the start of each paragraph too if you wish. If you'd rather not go through all the rigmarole of typing in two pages-worth just to test one of my hare-brained suggestions, load a piece of text which you already have, then change its margins to those which are suggested above, re-format it to **RIGHT-JUSTIFIED** and re-save it using the name **TEMP**, or **COLUMNS**, for example.

Whichever way you insert the text, you will see that on the screen it now appears in one very long column down the left-hand side of the screen. Ensure that it extends over **at least** two pages according to the page-break indicator lines, and also make sure (by a bit of careful editing) that you don't have a blank line on either side of a page break marker.

Now, put a sheet of once-used paper into the printer (blank side up, obviously) and **PRINT WHOLE DOCUMENT**. You might cross your fingers too.

Eventually the sheet will emerge with a column of text on the left-hand side of the paper. As the PcW16 prints like a snail on valium and spends "some time" compiling each page in its memory before it begins printing it, you will have plenty of time to reload this first sheet with its first column of text, ready to send it through the printer again.

When it emerges the second time, all being well, your piece of paper will have two columns of perfectly aligned text.

The mathematics of this process are quite simple. An A4 sheet is 210mm across so, if you set up your margins to 30mm and 120mm as suggested, both your columns of text will be $(210\text{mm}-120\text{mm}-30\text{mm}=)$ 60mm wide.

The first "page" column of text will finish 90mm from the left-hand edge of the paper, and the second "page" of text will start 90mm from the right-hand edge of the paper, so you will finish with two 60mm columns of text which are 30mm apart on the paper when it has been passed through the printer twice.

So far, so good. But it's not quite that easy. That is why I suggested printing off a few "header-ed and/or footer-ed" sheets to practice on.

Almost inevitably, even if you follow the instructions above precisely, your printer will require you to "tweak" the margin settings to get a "perfect result". "Perfect result" in this context means one that satisfies you.

The paper feed of your printer may be a little off-centre, for example. Or you may prefer to set different side margins or a different gap between the columns of text. Also, you may have to change the settings of your top and/or bottom margins if your headers and/or footers in the test printings do not appear as required, appropriately spaced away from your columns of text.

Don't regard this as a failure or a fault of your system; no two types of printer are exactly the same and this kind of setting up when done successfully will just prove to your chums how in command of the technology you really are!

Whenever you make changes to the document settings, make them in small stages and save them each time before doing each test printing.

Brian Watson



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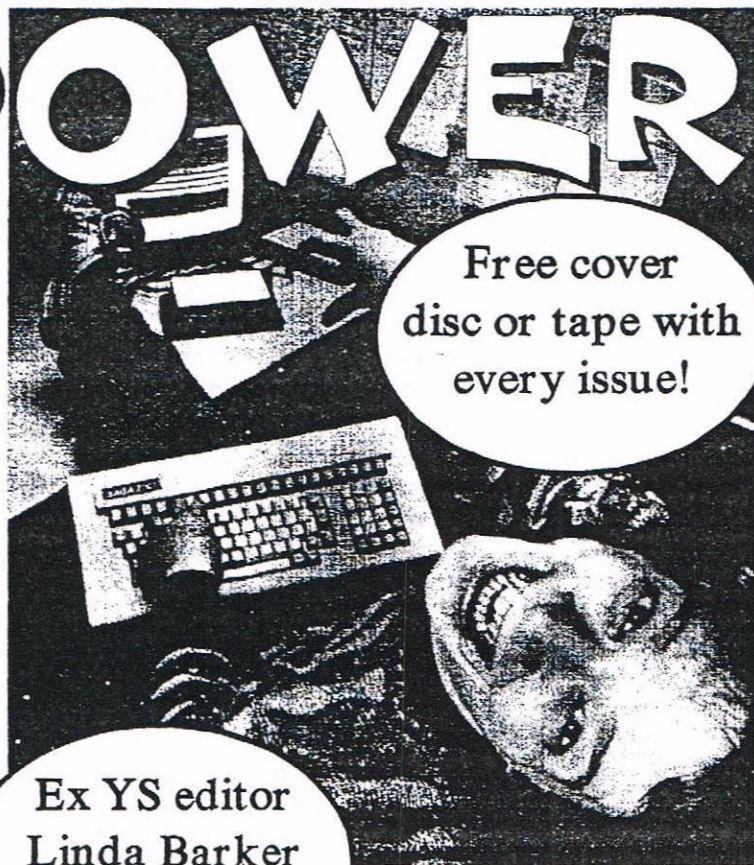
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8BIT's FIRST (AND LAST) ADVERTISING FEATURE

When **Arnor Ltd** ceased trading in 1995, it seemed that **Protext** (considered by many the best word processor for Amstrad's PCW and CPC computers) would be lost, along with the **Maxam** assembler, **Prospell**, and all their other programs. However, the range has been rescued by the purchase of the copyrights, source code and master copies. All the programs in the range have now been reissued.

The principal program in the 8-bit range is **Protext Professional**. This version, also known as v2.35, runs under CP/M on *any* PCW/PcW (except a PcW16) or CPC/CPC+ with a minimum of 128k memory. It has exceptionally powerful word processing, spell-checking and mail-merge facilities as well as many other integral utilities. The very user-friendly features, including its easy handling of text (multi-column text side by side on screen? No problem!), also the speed of movement around large text files make it a strong competitor with *any* other word processor, particularly in terms of value for money. *Any* 'Epson-compatible' printer can be used without purchasing additional software, and the colour option of printers such as the **Star** series is easy to use, as are your printer's in-built fonts and other features.

On a CPC, **Protext Professional** now comes pre-configured to utilise large-format (720k) discs in a 3½" B: drive and it will also automatically recognise and use a **Dk'Tronics** 64k or 128k Silicon Disc, if one is fitted.

On a PCW/PcW, automatic recognition is now included for CP/M .FIB files as well as enhanced automatic recognition during the set-up procedure of many other "extras" with which your computer may be fitted. *Additional* fonts may be used on a PCW by running **Protext Professional** with **ComSoft's** print enhancement program **ProPrint PCW**.

For the CPC series (only), **Protext**, **Prospell**, **Promerge**, the **Protype** print enhancement program, **Maxam** and **Utopia**, are available as separate modules on disc *or on ROM for virtually instant loading*, as are the programming languages **C** and **BCPL**. The languages may also be used on any PCW, but loading from disc only.

Protext Office, at £19.99 on disc, adds standard letter, file-sorting and accounts facilities to *any* version of **Protext**. It can easily be configured to suit a club's membership renewal reminder letters, for example. The integral **FSORT** filer program also works as a 'stand-alone' sorter of ASCII files; like a database, but with less rigid format requirements.

Maxam 2 is the full CP/M version of **Arnor's** Z80 Editor, Assembler, and Monitor for all PCWs and CPCs. With many more features than the Amsdos CPC disc and ROM versions this program, which can be supplied on 3" or 3½" disc and optionally as .DSK files to use with an emulator on a PC or Mac, is *the* quintessential developer's tool for Z80 programmers. **Maxam 2** is supplied as **Shareware**. The program itself and the documentation are both supplied on 3½" discs for just £5 (add £4 for the 3" disc version). You can print your own documentation from the text files supplied.

Arnor C. A full implementation of the programming language as used on many other computers as defined by Kernighan and Ritchie in **The C Programming Language**. The package produces compact Z80 code designed to run on Amstrad computers. A list of suggested books is supplied with the program. **C** is supplied, complete with documentation files, as **Shareware** on 3½" discs for just £5 (add £4 for the 3" disc version). You can print the documentation from the text files supplied or purchase (at a little over production cost price) a printed and bound version of the documentation for the CPC version. An Amsdos version (*not* **Shareware**, is also available on disc or ROM (for CPCs only).

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RoutePlanner is **completely graphical** and hence incredibly easy to use: with the Macintosh-like pointer system, you will be finding routes in seconds. The graphical route map (fully updated for 1997) features clear place and road labelling, with up to **32 times magnification**.

3000-place database

£24.95 from Comsoft: 0141 554 4735

RoutePlanner was written by Richard Fairhurst over a period of four years

fast calculation speed

compatible with *all* PCWs
– including 256k models

BCPL. Often described as "The Systems Programming Language", **BCPL** is also an excellent general purpose programming language. This implementation is supplied to run under CP/M versions 2.2 or CP/M Plus (for all PCW/CPC users) or Amsdos (for CPC users only); both are supplied on the master disc. Alternatively, **BCPL** can be supplied on ROM for CPC users only at £5 extra. In either case, a library of useful routines is supplied on disc, and the language comes with a comprehensive, lie-flat, A5 manual. **BCPL** is £15 when supplied entirely on disc (all PCWs and CPCs), or £20 when supplied on ROM (CPC only) with the routines library supplied on disc. **IMPORTANT NOTE**: Because of the specialist technical nature, we have only published a limited edition of **BCPL**. We may not reissue it again so, if you want to get one while it's here, *order it now*.

MONTRAC, a new monitor and tracing program designed to work alongside Amsdos **MAXAM** on the CPC, is available (on disc only) for £14.99.

The latest incarnation of **Protext**, for use on a PC, is now re-released in two versions:

- 1) **Version 4.3** is designed to be a cheap "step-up from an 8-bit" version. v4.3 is just £20.
- 2) The new full-featured **v6.7** is the better version for most PC users. It costs just £49.99, and is supplied with wholly revised User and Reference Manuals. This version of **Protext** has been reviewed in the December 1996 issue of **PC Plus**. Photocopies of the review *and a demonstration version* are available free upon request if you send a 3½" disc, return postage, and a self-addressed label in a padded envelope to Brian Watson.

The Atari version of **Protext**, v6.6, has followed the PC version, to which it is similar. It also costs £49.99.

Prodata, the PC database with the same 'look and feel' as **Protext**, is re-released at just £20.

CPC TUTORIALS

Brian Watson has now re-published the **Pipeline Software Tutorials** series in comb-bound, lie-flat, A4 editions. These are substantially updated and are a valuable yet easy series for users of CPC computers. **Pipeline Tutorials** are available from Brian Watson and, as a special "clearance" price to **8BIT** readers, they now cost £2 each, or buy any 5 for £8.

SPECIAL OFFERS

Like any company, stock levels of some of the **WACCO** programs have got out of balance: too many of some titles, only just enough of others, and reprints of some manuals overdue. Some of the programs published by our sister company, **ComSoft**, are in the same position. If this were to continue, it would mean that financing further developments would have to be restricted for lack of sufficient cashflow. Therefore, strictly subject to availability, we are running a **half-price** sale on **everything** except the PC titles, the Shareware (**MAXAM** and **C**), **Protext Professional** and **RoutePlanner**. Just take the prices on the following lists and divide by 2.

Please Note: to get the "50% off" prices off the software or the special prices for the **Pipeline Tutorials**, payment must be by cheque/PO payable to "B Watson", and orders *must* be sent to: Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambs CB6 2RA. For further information, you can phone: 01353 777 006, Fax: 01353 77 77 66, or send an e-mail to: protext@spheroid.demon.co.uk.

The United Amstrad User Group

An article on the changes since June 97 (CPC / Spectrum)

A lot has happened to the United Amstrad User Group since the group handed control over to Martyn Sherwood in June 97. I can say with confidence that these changes have been for the better, and they now encompass both the Spectrum and CPC.

So first of all just what is the United Amstrad User Group? It was set up during 1986 and the aim was to provide a focal point for all users of the Amstrad CPC. It was felt by the committee of the time that not enough coverage was being made of serious applications, utilities and uses that the CPC could carry out. There was also a lack of coverage on the emerging pd scene. The group started with a newsletter, and quickly turned it into a magazine ("CPC User") of A4 with 28-32 pages on average. The group expanded over the following years to provide a book library, pd library for tape and disc users, technical support - and much needed guidance for all CPC users. Eventually various positions were filled, such as Chairman, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Technical Editor, Programming Languages Editor, positions to cover: games, business and adventures and the Executive Editor.

Of course since the 1990's, the 8 bit user base as a whole has shrunk in size - this was probably inevitable with the dominance of the PC and Amiga computers and all that they have provided: faster processors, hard drives, better graphics, CD Rom, Internet link up etc. But for those of us who cannot afford to upgrade, or who simply enjoy the nostalgia these old machines provide - then the user group and independent magazines is an important way of life. The UAUG has been with us for a very long time, but I have noticed that support in the magazine in terms of quality material and reader input had diminished by the mid 90's. But once Martyn became the editor of CPC User in August 96, the magazine took on a new life. New articles appeared such as the dictionary of computing, history of computers, a list of all services, more trade adverts, better illustrations, and informative CPC articles.

Then in June 97 came one of the biggest changes for the group since its conception. The UAUG was handed over to Martyn lock stock and barrel - and I can only say that it was very much needed. Don't get me wrong though, all the previous officers connected with the group did a very good job and all their work has certainly been appreciated. I'm sure all those members of the UAUG who have been with them since the start, owe a big debt for the support they provided. However, some of the officers are in retirement, and as such felt they could not push the group any further, and felt a younger person with new ideas was the step forward.

Since June 97 Martyn's personality has come through with great success. What followed was a regular 32 page magazine, and from August 97 we even had cover discs and tapes to choose from. Free software at no extra charge, from Martyn's own pd library - that is what I call value for money! The magazine still carries its discounts page but there is also a "bargain basement" of exclusive titles from Prism PD or sales/wants. The amount of news items has gone up from no news to at least two or three pages - which shows there is still some activity going on from other CPC vendors and programmers. There are also regular reviews on pd software such as games, utilities and demos. With the group being handed over to one person, it means the UAUG is now run purely as a non profit making organisation. This means that all monies must be paid to Martyn himself - but do not worry about this - he has run a Spectrum group since 1991 on the same basis and has proven to be very reliable.

The fact he uses an Amiga 1200 for his desk top publishing should not reflect badly on him - how Martyn produces his magazine is up to him. I know there are other 8 bit groups/readers who think a magazine for a Spectrum, CPC, PCW should be produced on the appropriate machine. But if someone like Martyn who produces two magazines, runs two pd libraries and gives a personal reply to any members problems, needs to use a more powerful computer to make the job of magazine production easier - then we should not criticise. As long as you receive your magazine and support that goes with it, that is all that matters.

The UAUG (the name is still used despite the non profit status) still provides the book and software libraries,

technical support via Nigel Callcutt, tape to disc transfer advice via Dave Caleno and Martyn also offers advice on DTP and art packages and does his best to answer general beginners questions through the magazine - although he assures me the person will already have the answer via a personal reply by the time the mag is printed (something that some other groups do not do). He said,

"If someone is in need of help, then I see no point in making them wait until the next available issue - only to be told by an editor that they cannot help, or read the manual, or for the question to be passed over to other readers. I will do some research to find an answer - and take my time to write back with a full explanation. It's the service my readers expect because they have paid for it." You can't say fairer than that!

Even if you also use a PC, you can obtain advice through the United PC User Group run by another family member - from the Amstrad 1512 right up to a Windows 95 PC. Even re-subscribing or taking out a subscription for the first time has been improved upon. You can now choose to receive free software on a free 3½ disc or free tape. Those on 3" discs must supply the disc. There are three options to choose from (you'll have to send for details to find out!) which makes joining the group more worthwhile.

The essence of the way the UAUG for CPC users is run, is repeated on the Spectrum side - and if you have never seen PD Power (40 pages), then you are missing out on a really worthwhile & informative magazine. In some ways PD Power has benefited from the UAUG as some ideas have been incorporated.

Miles Kinloch has contributed a lot of good articles on the Spectrum +D interface in recent issues and there is some good coverage of Spectrum emulators on the Amiga. Regular articles are the +3 pages (covering everything from technical queries to utilities), readers letters, reviews of pd software, classic hardware and software and a club page which is hosted by ex Your Sinclair/Amstrad Action editor Linda Barker (applies to CPC User as well).

Both groups will incorporate the services of Galaxy Software bod, Leon Brown, who will be responsible for reviewing all the pd software and reviewing them. So for all you CPC fans out there, you can join the CPC group straight away for £8.50 (first year - then £8 thereafter (UK prices). For PD Power it is £12.50 (first year) £11 thereafter (UK). Let us know what media you want - or even Amiga or PC disc. Full details of the software free with each issue is on page 3 of the magazine. If you want us to supply 6x3" discs then you will need to add a further £20 - this covers the cost of buying them - & you can then opt for a free PC or Amiga disc.

Anyone wishing to see a trial copy of CPC User or PD Power can do so by sending £1 payable to M Sherwood, or 5x20p stamps (that's what I did and received an intro pack within 7 days). An accompanying letter told me about the history of the group, changes made and what was being planned for the future. Joining the group was the best decision I ever made - and on a personal note, I think it is more convenient for one person to be in charge of finances, production and decision making. It means the response time to peoples queries, orders etc is far quicker than I have experienced elsewhere. So if you are serious about your CPC, dedicated to it, then why not join a dedicated CPC user group? Here is a quick run down of the services offered by the group, most of which is applicable to the Spectrum group as well:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| * 6 issues a year | * Cover disc or tape |
| * Free software when joining | * Helplines |
| * Repair service for members (CPC) | * Technical support |
| * Discounts on products | * Book and pd libraries (book library for CPC) |
| * National/International book search | * Occasional competitions |
| * Club page hosted by Linda Barker | * Readers services |

The address to writ to is:

Martyn Sherwood, UAUG, 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby CV22 7HJ

THE CASE FOR PROTEXT by Brian Watson

I came to computers very 'green' in October 1987. Two years previously I had started working as a self-employed small (5'5"!) businessman, and was feeling that I needed to produce more professional-looking statistical presentations and business letters than the hand-written ones my customers, employers and bankers were having to put up with. With all the other start-up costs (own car rather than one supplied by an employer, insurances, etc, etc) either paid for, partly paid for, or committed for the future, my funds were quite limited.

However, I bought and read two months of each computer magazine that I could get from our local newsagents. There was still quite a wide range of computer systems vying for position then, none of which seemed to be very compatible with any other, in terms of the type of discs (I couldn't face using tapes with their inherent slowness) or the programs used.

Because I wanted the computer to be fun as well as functional, I settled on a CPC6128, close cousin to the PCW series, for its greater versatility, despite a smaller memory size. The three(!) magazines available for it then made it clear that it was very much a 'proper' computer with business packages as well as a lot of leisure software, with more promised for later. Like a PCW, it came complete with a monitor, but a colour rather than monochrome, screen. The keyboard looked sufficiently like a typewriter to fool me into thinking that I could manage it. I was then, and am still, a reasonably quick four-finger typist.

The first 'business' program I bought was **Mini-Office 2**, very familiar to readers in its version for other 8-bit users, but I soon found it's word processor module awkward and restricting. The output to my Amstrad DMP2160 9-pin printer was dotty and angular so I began researching the available alternatives by reference to advertisements and reviews in the CPC magazines, and everything pointed towards **Protext** being a likely improvement.

On a CPC it was, and is, possible to buy **Protext** in separate modules on disc, but it was rather expensive if built up that way. If the ROM (plug in chips) versions were used, it could cost over £80 if bought in stages, although it did have the advantage of *instant* loading upon switch-on. However there was version I discovered, called **CP/M Protext** to distinguish it from the CPC-only 'Amsdos' options, which had the lot (spell-checking, mail-merging, et al) on one disc for just £39.99. This is exactly the same version that runs on the PCW/PcWs too. It was just what I needed, and at a sensible price.

I found one being sold second-hand for £20 and it was possible to pick it up at the start of our Easter holidays. I spent most of the week with my nose in the manual, but without a computer. The manual was clear and the controls so logical I was up and running with **CP/M Protext** within 15 minutes of my return home. The car was unloaded the next morning.

Rather than menus, **Protext** uses logical commands. For example, to find out what's on a disc, type 'cat' or 'dir' then tap RETURN, and "Robert's your father's brother". No 'logging in' a new disc, apart from doing an *optional* two key 'catalogue/directory check' to see the filenames which are available on the current drive's disc.

Protext beat **Mini-Office 2** hands down. Even an ordinary user like me was soon creating a range of standard letters and mail-merging too. **Protext** uses plain text files as its databases so it is fast, flexible, and very economic with disc space for sophisticated mail-merge tasks. I could not compare **Protext** with any version of **LocoScript** until much later.

I added a larger-format 3.5" drive B: to my CPC with a dictionary on each B: drive disc, but managed very happily for several years with two 3" 178k drives.

The whole program, including Spell-checking, Mail-merge and the integral utilities easily fits within even a CPC or PCW's standard amount of fitted memory.

I bought a Star LC-10 colour printer and wrote a new printer driver for it to include the ability to use the printer's own fonts and its colour options, following the simple instructions in the **Protext** manual. Even as a complete technoramous, I found it quite easy to do and naturally assumed every word processor was 'open' enough to let you do things like that.

In 1989, I was asked to write a regular monthly column on **Protext** for a CPC club magazine and they wanted it produced to fit their standard page layout; just 60 lines and in two 30 letter columns, side by side on the screen as well as the printer, so that's what I did for them. Again, I just assumed every word processor let you do that easily.

As a sideline to my other business, I have also been a professional writer of plays and factual articles for about twenty years. Being able to count the words in, say, a 20k file in less than three seconds and moving from top to bottom of such a file in less time than *that* was how **Protext** worked quickly and well to support my labours.

I found actors, publishers, and editors were happy with the printed output of **Protext** until I added a utility to transfer files to PC-format discs. I had also added a couple of other CP/M programs to my **Protext** disc and was soon swapping from one to the other and back again effortlessly.

Protext let me set up the widely different margins, headers, footers, etc required for the odd and even pages of scripts and other writing assignments simply, and by printing off the odd pages then reloading them to print the backs with all the even page sides I saved our drama group the huge photocopying bills we had formerly put up with to fully equip a cast and production team. I thought every word processor... Well, you get the idea.

The sheer common sense operation of **Protext** kept me using it rather than consider 'upgrading' to a PC. I heard that the PC version of **Protext** included many additional features but the CPC/PCW version had everything I found I needed.

Along the way, I had discovered a very powerful feature of **Protext** called EXFILES; years before Mulder and Scully came along. These are mini-programs which you write using **Protext** and then run from within the program. Say you want to print four chapters of a book, one after the other. First you create a file (perhaps called 'princhap') comprising four lines of ordinary text 'p chap1', 'p chap2', 'p chap3', 'p chap4' followed by a blank line. Save it and type 'x princhap', followed by a press of RETURN, and it does the job for you.

The EXFILE system is extraordinarily useful, and I am still evolving new uses for it. To save my work, archive my files to a backup disc across all user areas with screen prompts along the way, then return to where I was in my original piece of work I do it by running an EXFILE. It makes safe working a pleasure. "Dave the Disk Doctor" would be proud of me!

Around 1990, I heard an upgrade was being offered which improved spell-checking facilities further, so I paid **Protext**'s publisher **Arnor** to register with them. This, and my on-going contacts with them for my **Protext Page** articles, impressed me with their friendly, yet extremely professional, approach to handling their customer relations.

Then in 1995 I heard the company was in trouble, a victim of the recession. The expense of city centre premises and an unfashionable reluctance to fire the loyal staff apparently made **Arnor** uneconomic. I couldn't let **Protext** go - it was my favourite program!

My business experience suggested I should 'express an interest' early and, with the help of a CPC club **WACCI**, I followed the winding up procedure to the end and bought the copyrights to all **Arnor's** programs for the CPCs and PCWs. The **Arnor** partners were real gentlemen to the end, clearly labelling and boxing separately for me all the master discs and ROM images, source code, plus all the text files on discs which were needed to produce the manuals. They even included a perfect printed copy of each manual to work from.

So the programs are in my name, and the CPC club have passed their interest to Peter Campbell of **ComSoft** who is a perfect partner for me. He handles sales and I provide user support. Although we have only met three times, I am very happy with the partnership.

We are both part-timers in our handling of **Protext**, but we endeavour to provide a fair and professional service at reasonable cost. The program now costs just £25 and user support is free. As the fastest and most versatile word processor for the PCW and CPC with features which cost extra elsewhere we know we have a bargain. Many people have come to find **Protext** preferable for its speed, ease of use, and compatibility with other programs. Our only competitor for the PCW is the **LocoScript** system which starts with a broader user base and allegiance as it is the program PCW purchasers get free with the machine.

In terms of font handling **LocoScript** knocks spots off **Protext**, no argument. There is an add-on published by **ComSoft** called **ProPrint PCW** which enhances the **Protext's** printed output somewhat, but still **LocoScript/LocoFont** handles that better. Perfect justification, micro-spacing, and widely variable font-sizing are beyond **Protext** outside the elite font in the standard configuration. A wide range of text modifications can be set up, but I generally find it more trouble than it is worth for my purposes.

In almost every other respect it baffles me why people stick with **LocoScript**. When we rescued **Protext** I bought a PCW9512 to be able to handle PCW user support and it came with **LocoScript 2**. Acknowledging that I was going back to square one with a new program, for a whole weekend I wrestled with its menus, its restrictive 'standard templates' system, its cumbersome file handling and its slowness in almost every operational respect. I approached it with an open mind although of course I am the first to admit that I am biased. Not all computer users have my requirements of a Word Processor system, and the principal competitor's periodic upgrade path option (at a price) may appeal to some.

As a heavy WP user, I would prefer to have the features I expect to be there already built in, or easily configurable, with a friendly and reasonably prompt-free user-support service available at the end of a phone line at normal rates. That is part of the service we endeavour to provide for **Protext** users. It may not be full time, but we hope it's user-friendly in our way of doing business.

There is one later development which needs to be mentioned. When **Arnor** went down, a company offered to handle the PC, Atari and Amiga versions for the original programmers who are still the copyright holders. After a year, that company proved unable to do the job, so now Peter and I have formed a partnership with the copyright holders of those later versions. So we now offer the **Protext** system PC-continuity too. **Protext** will be around well into the next century, I am pleased to say.

You can write for further information to: **Protext Software** at *Harrolden*, 39, High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, ELY, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2RA, England. Alternatively, Telephone 01353 777006, Fax to 01353 777766, or send an e-mail to protext@spheroid.demon.co.uk. There is a **Protext** Web Site at <http://www.cix.co.uk/~mtiley/protext/>

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

COMMODORE - WANTED

Wanted - Commodore Plus 4 in gwo.
Any reasonable price considered.
Please call Liz on 0181 969 2832.

Commodore 264 series model 16, any
information on it please also on OKI
182 control codes. Both look
interesting to this Oldie Willie,
Whitfield Cottage, Eyemouth,
Scotland TD14 5TH. 01890 771492

I'm compiling a catalogue of
products and services for the C64.
Please get in touch with your
information. Niall Tracey, 32,
McNeill Crescent, Gargunnoch,
Stirling FK8 3BX

Manual wanted for Commodore MPS1000
printer. Phone Jim Crumley 01582
(Dunstable) 696166

COMMODORE 64/128 - MISC

Commodore Faction is now out. Send
£2 cheque (to Gala Publishing) to
David Connolly at 7, Glyme Close,
Woodstock, Oxon OX20 1LB, or send
SAE for their information sheet.

Wow! Huge Spice Girls demo by Andrew
Fisher of Commodore Format. Send £1
cheque to Andrew Fisher, 30, Rawlyn
Road, Cambridge CB5 8NL

Commodore Scene is still going
strong, co-ordinating an import
scheme from CMD and publishing
'small press' software. See display
advert elsewhere in 8BIT.

AMSTRAD CPC - FOR SALE

Loads of CPC6128 hardware and
software; some very rare. MJ Cotton,
10, Stuart Close, Brandon, Suffolk
IP27 0HB

Second-hand disc adventure games for
a CPC6128. SAE for lists to Angela
Allum, 22, Point Royal, Bracknell,
RG12 7HH

CPC 464 Spanish keyboard, now £5 +
p&p or possible free delivery. Also
list of 2nd-hand original (with
instructions) tape/disc software and

hardware. 1st class stamp + label
for list to Brian Watson, c/o 8BIT.

AMSTRAD CPC - WANTED

CPC games wanted. Brainstorm, BAT,
Battle Command, Battle Stars,
Gunboat, Iron Lord, Moon Blaster,
PHM Pegasus, Pinball Magic, Red
Scorpion, Roller Coaster, Taking
Tiger Mountain, Americas' Cup
Challenge, Clever and Smart, The
Archon Collection, and others.
Please send price list to: Martin J
Bela, 11, Colwell Drive, Brookside,
Alvaston, Derbs DE24 0UP

AMSTRAD PCW - FOR SALE

Two PCW8526s upgraded to 512s plus a
9512, complete apart from discs. £40
each plus postage. Also a couple of
8256 manuals. David Williams, 32/34,
Carfin Street, New Stevenston,
Motherwell ML1 4JL or 01698 732403

Huge list of PCW hardware, parts,
and software. A4 SAE to Ian Studley,
44, Paynton Road, St Leonards on
Sea, East Sussex TN37 7DY

Phone for PCW hardware/software
lists to Roy Martin. 01752
(Cornwall) 839430

AMSTRAD PCW - WANTED

SC2DATE.COM for PCW. Sets date on
PCW's Supercalc for dates after
1999. (John Hudson, Huddersfield,
PD). Also, IMPEXP program downloads
288 files to (and from) PCW. Phone
01268 (Basildon, Essex) 522484 or
Fax 01268 450432

AMSTRAD PCW - MISCELLANEOUS

The German Joyce user group is an
association for Amstrad/Schneider
PCW users, regardless of skill or
application. Contact them by writing
c/o Werner Neumeyer-Bubel, Liemecke
8a, D34466 Wolfhagen, Germany, phone
0049 5692 995146, fax 0049 5692
995148, or you can e-mail them on
joyce-ag@t-online.de

For low-cost public domain PCW/PcW
clipart copying & scanning service
send a SAE, a 3.5" disc, and 50p to:
PD Blake, 99, Normandy Avenue.

Beverley, East Yorks HU17 8PR.

Crawley PCW Club meets on the first
Thursday of each month. A helpline
is available. For details write to
John Fisher at Pradines, Four Elms
Road, EDENBRIDGE, TN8 6AF.

Capital Computer Club, c/o Ray C
Petersen (the Secretary), 21,
Mapplebeck Street, Titahi Bay,
Porirua, New Zealand now has members
with Amstrads (all sorts), Amigas,
Macs, Sanyos and PCs with DOS and
CP/M. New members are welcome.

TRACK is the advertising feature
section of SCOTWEST.pcw, magazine of
the Club of the same name. Contact
David Williams, 32/34, Carfin
Street, New Stevenston, MOTHERWELL
ML1 4JL Scotland. 01698 732403.

The Cornwall PCW Club meets on the
second Saturday of each month in St
Austell. Further details from John
Walker on 01752 (Plymouth) 706266.

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM - FOR SALE

Hundreds of software titles for
sale. SAE to JA Waddington at 11,
Finsbury Drive, Wrose, BRADFORD,
West Yorks BD2 1QA. Also Classix
fanzine (see display advertisement)

Bakewell Computers of 70a Sandmere
Road, Clapham, London SW4 7QH report
having 3,000 Spectrum games in
emulator form for use on a PC. Cost
£11.50, or phone 07071 771777 first.

Spectrum tapes for sale from 35p.
Also discs from £2. SAE to Pauline,
2, Syndale Cottages, Syndale Farm,
Ospringe, Kent ME13 0RJ.

ALL FORMATS - MISCELLANEOUS

Extensive lists of computer-related
stuff for sale. Send SAE to Arthur
Coulter, 43 Elizabeth Road, Moseley,
Birmingham B13 8QH

Contacts for the RM-Link series:
Research Machines User Group,
Freepost, Esher, Surrey KT10 0BR, or
Mr A Byrom, Gravesend Grammar School
for Boys, Church Walk, Gravesend,
Kent ME3 7EJ

continued.....

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS - continued

Loads off Stuff for Amstrad CPC, Spectrum and Atari 800 for sale. Wanted; Software and hardware for the Acorn BBC and Master. Also magazines, consumables and books. Call Robert Nisbet on 01865 (Oxford) 351448.

New publishing house is looking for new software for Classic Computers, especially BBC, CPC, PCW and Spectrum. Call Robert Nisbet on 01865 (Oxford) 351448.

Spectrum, C64, CPC, BBC, Amiga, Atari ST. Lots of software available for most classic computers. Send SAE indicating which lists are required. Alan Cresswell, 18, West Street, Geddington, Northants NN14 1BD.

WANTED: Issues 6, 9, 11, 12, and 13 of 8BIT magazine. Any reasonable price considered. Please call Stephen on 01268 785184 or write to 100, Downhall Road, RAYLEIGH, Essex SS6 9LT.

For other back issue availability contact 8BIT at the usual address.

Computer magazines bought and sold. Ancient to modern. SAE for lists. Also software and hardware for sale. Jonathan Marsh, 20, Camp Mount, Pontefract, West Yorks WF8 4BY

The FREDDY DRIVE; suits CPC, PCW Spectrum. Also CPC repairs and PCs built to order. Caltronics, 14, Blakeney Crescent, Melton Mowbray, Leics LE13 0QR

Selling off most of my Commodore 64, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST games. Also some serious software, books, magazines, hardware. Please send large SAE for lists. Chris Hurlock, 8c, Hamlet court Rosad, Westcliffe on Sea, Essex SS0 7LX

Wanted - memory card, any size for NC200 Notepad. Any reasonable price considered. Please call Liz on 0181 969 2832.

Interested in developing software for the Amstrad PcW16? If so, contact Richard on 01524 68989 after

6pm or you can e-mail me on richard@courtaulds-lingerie.thenet.co.uk

An ENORMOUS amount of Acorn Electron stuff, including the computer, for sale. Arthur Coulter, 43, Elizabeth Road, Moseley, BIRMINGHAM B13 8QH. Tel: 0121 449 2244.

5.25" discs DS/DD black/various colours £5 for 25 incl p&p. Possible discount for higher quantities. Michael D Pearson, 31 Saxon Close, Stratford on Avon, Warks CV37 7DX. Tel: 01789 294978 (after 7pm or daytime Sundays)

Spectrum, C64, BBC, Amiga, Atari ST. Lots of software for these and other 8-bit computers. Prices from 50p. Huge lists. Please send SAE indicating lists required to: Alan, 18, West Street, Geddington, NORTHANTS NN14 1BD.

Hardware and Software for Amstrad CPCs, Spectrums, and Commodore C64s on disk and tape. For a list please send a first class stamp with your name and address and which type of computer you use to Stephen Willcox, 20, Hesa Road, HAVES, Middx UB3 2DP.

For CP/M Support, The PD Software Library, Winscombe House, Beacon Road, CROWBOROUGH, Sussex, 01892 663298, owns large volumes of CP/M software from all over the globe. Send A5 SSAE for their catalogue

The UK CP/M User Group (CPMUKUG) is now defunct, but the disc library is not. UK volumes are now up to number 130. For a catalogue, send a formatted disc to Rodney Hannis, 34 Falmouth Road, READING, RG2 8QR. 01734 876641. Please include return postage - no other charges

Loads of goodies for your CPC, PCW, Spectrum, Apricot, Games console: Tapes, Discs, Roms, Books, Magazines and Hardware. For list send A5 SSAE to: Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, WORTHING, Sussex BN11 3NQ

Einstein Magazine and All Micro News is the magazine of the Steam Computer Society - 12 years old and still going (very) strong! Write to

AE (Tony) Adams, Ivy Cottage, Church Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8TY, enclosing a large envelope and two first class stamps for more details

Did you know? The IEBA (The Independent Eight Bit Association) is a group active in promoting the use of 8-bit computers. The latest edition of their Directory of 8-bit Services is now out and is free to new members. Life Membership is £5. For further details send 2 1st class stamps to the membership secretary; Mr David Williams, 24/24, Carfin Street, New Stevenston, Motherwell ML1 4JL. Tel: 01698 732403.

Are you a user of an Amstrad NC100, 150, or 200 notepad? If you believe there is some benefit to be gained by linking together such users please phone John Walker on 01752 (PLYMOUTH) 706266 and we will take it from there

WANTED: Memory card(s), ideally 1 Meg size, for Amstrad NC200 notepad. Any reasonable price considered. Please call Gary on 01582 (LUTON) 483894 evenings or weekends or 0402 (Mobile) 844369 anytime.

Other "NC" series enquiries can be routed towards Protext Software via 8BIT magazine's address, as they offer free user support. A special version of Protext is the word processor used in the NC series and we have documentation available on its advanced use.

For SAM sales and support, and for updated news on "The Hoard" (see issue 19 of 8BIT magazine) of 8-bit software, send an A4 SAE to: Bob Brenchley, Format, 34, Bourton Road, GLOUCESTER GL4 0LE.

Sharp Users Club. Write to Andrew Ferguson at 11, Harcourt Close, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 1UZ, or 01491 574850 for further details

Vision 8 Software carry a large catalogue of software for ZX Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari XL, MSX, etc. Write to: Vision 8 Software, De Pazant 42, 7905 HD Hoogeveen, Holland.

continued.....

SMALL WORKS DEPT

The section for offers of help and repairs at fair prices. Please help those mentioned by enclosing return postage and a sensibly-sized SAE with each request for help.

Brian Watson keeps a large supply of the "officially-recommended spares" replacement 3" belts at one pound each (incl p&p). These are suitable for use in all 3" disc/disk drive mechanisms (CPC, PCW, Einstein, Spectrum, etc). Note that no fitting instructions are supplied. Write c/o the usual 8BIT address.

Wealden Supplies: a range of quality consumables at low prices. For example, range includes blank disks; 3 1/2" HD pack of 10 for £4.50 + 87p. Cheques payable to Richard Avery. Send orders or SSAE to 60, Pitreavie Drive, Knights Manor, HAILSHAM, East Sussex BN27 3XG. Tel: 01323 844371. E-mail: 106765.2102@compuserve.com

Drive belts suitable for all 3" mechanisms including CPCs, PCWs, PCs, Spectrum +3s. Includes easy to follow fitting instructions. £2.45 inc P&P from AJ Howard, 65, Altyre Way, BECKENHAM, Kent BR3 3ED

For PCW help, try Anthony Hill, the joint co-ordinator of the Heads of the Valleys PCW User Group, at 20, Velindre Place, Whitchurch, CARDIFF CF4 2AN. Please enclose an SAE and say which type of PCW/PCW you have if you write. He actually *prefers* phone calls which can be made to either 01222 618012 or 01829 271515, either of which numbers should find him.

Nigel Calcutt offers a range of accessories and low-cost repairs for any Amstrad type of CPC. He may also be able to help with problems on other computers, so try him at 14, Blakeney Crescent, Melton Mowbray, Leics LE13 0QR.

Lloyd Garland, the proprietor of Alchemist Software, offers to assist with any Spectrum-related 'techy' queries and problems. His address is 126, Hayward Road, Redfield, BRISTOL BS5 9QA.

For help on Spectrum problems, or general hints, tips, and advice on 8-bit emulators, write or telephone Alchemist Research, 62, Tithe Barn Lane, Woodhouse, SHEFFIELD S13 7LN. Telephone: 0114 269 7644. No costs, but if you can send an SAE and (where necessary) relevant blank media, it will help process the query much faster.

Commodore 64 Technical advice. If you have a technical problem on a C64/128 write to Andrew Fisher, the former tech consultant to Commodore Format and Commodore Force at 30, Rawlyn Road, CAMBRIDGE CB5 8NL with a SSAE or an Intl Reply Coupon.

Amstrad PCW 8256/8512 parts for DIY repair: 3" drives, CPU boards, Power boards, Tubes, Keyboards, printers, etc. Also some books and software. Advice freely given. SAE for lists and info. Ron King, 19, Stancliffe Road, BEDFORD, Beds MK41 9AN

For those who need help, where better to look than the world-wide chat lines? Brian Watson offers to access the internet newsgroups which carry the conversations between enthusiasts of particular computers. Note this is for *help* only; not hardware/software sales.

Send your enquiry on paper with an SAE to 8BIT with a "one pound" coin and your name and address. On receipt here, it is posted in the appropriate newsgroup. One week later, or as soon as it is likely that no more replies are forthcoming, the answer(s) is/are transferred to paper and sent back to the enquirer. That's it; simple and effective.

We have already had some notable successes, and a couple of failures, but generally it appears to work well.

For example, details of clubs and contacts outside the UK have been passed to someone who was emigrating, and a disk drive for a C64 was found in a hurry when a breakdown was threatening the completion of an important sixth form college assignment.

LATE NEWS ENTRIES

Hans-Christof Tuchen, editor of Mumpitz, has kindly sent me Issue 9 of Commodore Unlimited which reports more strangeness and silliness from Alex de Vries of Crystal Software (see last issue of BIT for the first example of his overblown sense of self-importance and arrogance to come our way).

From another source, I hear he has been making offers of "partnership" to at least one other magazine editor.

About a month ago, I got a follow-up communication from Alex claiming that he had been misrepresented and that I had not understood him correctly. Re-read what he faxed me (it was in issue 19) and draw your own conclusions.

Consequently, as a final commercial venture, 8BIT will soon be acquiring a stock of bargepoles. These will be sold on (at cost) to all former subscribers of 8BIT with the recommendation that they are used for *not* touching Alex de Vries or any other representative of Crystal Software.

Bookends of 41, Fore Street, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1PG keep a large stock of remaindered computer books at good prices. Send SAE for their latest lists.

The huge computer company ICL run a division called **Second Time Around** which recycles and re-sells old business computers. Good for them, we say.

Flounder is the e-mag successor to 8BIT. It will include computer stuff, lots of miscellaneous nonsense, and be a lot more outspoken than 8BIT has ever been. E-mail flounder@spheroid.demon.co.uk to get a free subscription.

Apart from the whole magazine, there are no other late entries this time.

NEXT COPY DATE

Kidding, right?

New 8 BIT magazine by:

Martyn Sherwood of The United Amstrad User Group

Dear readers

No doubt a lot of you are lamenting the loss of 8Bit as a major magazine for the 8 bit community. Certainly 8Bit has shone amongst other magazines such as Format, Adventure Probe, Crashed, PCW Today, Wacci, CPC User and PD Power - all of which have served the 8 bit user with an equal amount of enthusiasm, professionalism - and a means of providing useful information to its readers. It is due to the last few years of hard work that Brian has put into his magazine, that has prompted me to take up the reins of continuing this type of magazine to cover all the major formats both z80 and 6502.

It should be made clear that a take over has not happened. 8Bit was not for sale and as such the new magazine will be a completely new project, but still covering all the 8 bits. The magazine will be called "6502/z80" to represent machines catered to. If everyone of you subscribes to the new magazine, I will produce the magazine 6 times a year - with more articles suitable for more than one machine. I will welcome any input. Articles from Spectrum and CPC users can be on tape, 3" disc or 3½. PCW16 users must send articles on PC formatted discs. PCW users on 3" disc must send printouts until I devise a method of accessing your files on disk. Other 8 bit users will have to send printouts - but I will be explaining in the next issue how I go about producing the magazine which will assist contributors.

So how will the change-over take place? At the end of this article is a form for everyone to fill in. It is for everyone who receives a refund from Brian, so that you can send payment to me which can be either for a 1 year subscription - or just one issue (trial copy). With all these details coming in - it will no doubt take a while for a new database to be compiled in readiness for the following issue - so please be patient as I also run dedicated Spectrum and CPC user groups.

What of the magazine itself? There will be regular sections on the PCW, Spectrum, CPC, Z88, and C64/128. I already have articles planned for coverage of CP/M which is suitable for Spectrum +3, PCW and CPC. In addition to this I have a series of articles promised to cover machine code programming on the 6502 to cover the BBC models A & B, Vic-20, Oric 1/Atmos, Electron (and C64 which uses the 6510 - a modified version of the 6502). Also planned are articles on hardware projects covering the Spectrum, ZX81 and Ace computers.

Trade adverts will continue, as this was a particular feature of 8 Bit, so that users of all 8 bits can be put in touch with support groups and mail order companies. However the big difference will be free software with each magazine! This will be in the form of tapes, 3" and 3½ inch discs for Speccy/CPC users. 3" discs must be supplied by you, or us at the cost of £14 (4 discs). For PCW and Commodore users - I will need a volunteer to help with the distribution of cover discs. You will in effect be a PD/Shareware librarian - someone who has built up a good stock of titles and can commit themselves to mass duplication of cover discs/tapes. Two floppy drives is essential for this purpose and of course, being able to set aside the time to carry this out. If you have both 5¼ and 3½ so much the better. I will also need a volunteer to copy C64 cover tapes. The best procedure is to store titles on disc and copy them to tape - the principle that I use for Prism PD on the Spectrum and CPC.

Those who take on these responsibilities will be given a free subscription to the new magazine. Free issues of the magazine will also go to anyone who can submit a series of articles that will cover a number of issues - I hope that will be a good incentive!

If anyone wishes to receive PC or Amiga cover discs - then I will be able to sort that out for you. As for the size of the magazine, page count, price, and the number of issues per year - these factors are dependent on a good response to this news article - it all depends on your enthusiasm for Brian's good work to continue.

The IEBA & WACCI
present
The 1999 UK 8-bit Convention

“UK8”

THE 8-bit computer event of the year
is to be held at

The Saddlers Club, Bescott Crescent, Walsall

from

10a.m. - 4p.m.

on

Sunday 26th September

Come and enjoy a pleasant day out in the English Midlands
See a wide range of hardware and software being demonstrated

Meet some of the other people involved in 8-bit computing

Hunt for bargains on the “all formats” trade stands

Food facilities are nearby, or bring your own

Bar open from 12 – 3.30

£2 per person - admission by ticket only

Exhibitors by arrangement

For a booking form and further information write, enclosing an A4 stamped and self-addressed envelope, to **UK8, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2RA, England**. Alternatively, you can e-mail:

UK8@spheroid.demon.co.uk

The End

Over a period of time I will be doing my level best to provide a good magazine which will be produced along the same professional standards and ethics as Brian - and any ideas for the magazine will always be read with interest - it is your magazine and your comments will be noted. One final point is that I will uphold Brian's viewpoint of NOT divulging the new database records, to any other party. The magazine will be run in accordance to the Data Protection Act, and also the Press Complaints Commission - something that I have always done with PD Power and CPC User.

Best wishes,

Martyn.

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS COMMENCING FROM THE NEW ISSUE

Dear Martyn,

Please enrol me onto your subs list to receive the new version of 8 BIT magazine for 4 issues per year. I enclose payment of £12 payable to "M Sherwood" or £3 for issue '0' (introductory issue).

I wish to receive a cover tape or disc and have underlined one of the following options:

Spectrum media:	Cassette	3" disc	+D 3½" disc	+3 B:3½
CPC media:	Cassette	3" disc	3½" disc	
Amiga disc:	Double density	High density (please state XL or HF0:)	_____	
PC disc:	5¼ HD	3½ DD	3½ HD	

My details are:

Name _____ Address _____

Computer type _____ Articles preferred _____

The new 8 BIT "6502/z80"

A follow up on the existing magazine by Brian Watson. This new magazine is produced by Wallis Publishing and will have the following features:

- * Articles for all 8 bits both Z80 and 6502 processors
- * More hardware and technical coverage
- * Free cover tapes and discs for Spectrum / CPC (other formats to follow)
- * 52 pages of A5 articles
- * Trade adverts, * Internet book search
- * Club discounts, * Bargain basement (products for sale)
- * Readers 'for sale and wants'

Send £3 for trial copy or £12 for 1 year subs. Payment to "M Sherwood" at: Wallis Publishing, 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby CV22 7HJ. Tel 01788 817473 (enquiry line) 7-9pm weekdays only.